

## Interviewing and New Accounts Clerks

(O\*NET 53105 and 55332)

### Nature of the Work

*Interviewing and new accounts clerks* obtain information from individuals and business representatives who are opening bank accounts, gaining admission to medical facilities, participating in consumer surveys, and completing various other forms. By mail, telephone, or in person, these workers solicit and verify information, create files, and perform a number of other related tasks.

The specific duties and job titles of interviewing and new accounts clerks depend upon the type of employer. In doctors' offices and other health care facilities, for example, *interviewing clerks* are also known as *admitting interviewers* or *patient representatives*. These workers obtain all preliminary information required for admission, such as the patient's name, address, age, medical history, present medications, previous hospitalizations, religion, persons to notify in case of emergency, attending physician, and the party responsible for payment. In some cases, interviewing clerks may be required to verify benefits with the person's insurance provider or work out financing options for those who might need it.

Other duties of interviewers in health care include assigning patients to rooms and summoning escorts to take patients to their rooms; sometimes these workers may escort patients themselves. Using the facility's computer system, they schedule lab work, x-rays, and surgeries and prepare admitting and discharge records and route them to appropriate departments. They may also bill patients, receive payments, and answer the telephone. In an outpatient or office setting, they also schedule appointments, keep track of cancellations, and provide general information about care. In addition, the role of the admissions staff, particularly in hospitals, is expanding to include a wide range of patient services from assisting patients with financial and medical questions to helping family members find hotel rooms.

Interviewing clerks who conduct market research surveys and polls for research firms have somewhat different responsibilities. These interviewers ask a series of prepared questions, record the responses, and forward the results to management. They may ask individuals questions about their occupation and earnings, political preferences, buying habits, or customer satisfaction. Although most interviews are conducted over the telephone, some are conducted in focus groups or by randomly polling people at a shopping mall. More recently, the Internet is being used to elicit people's opinions. Almost all interviewers use computers or similar devices to enter the responses to questions.

*New accounts clerks*, more commonly referred to as *customer service representatives*, handle a wide variety of operations in banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions. Their principal tasks are to handle customer inquiries, explain the institution's products and services to people, and refer customers to the appropriate sales personnel. If a person wants to open a checking or savings account, or an IRA, the customer service representative will interview the customer and enter the required information into a computer for processing. They will also assist people in applying for other services, such as ATM cards, direct deposit, and certificates of deposit. Some customer service representatives also sell traveler's checks, handle savings bonds, perform foreign currency transactions, and perform teller duties, as required. Although the majority of customer service representatives work in branch offices and deal directly with customers, a growing number are being hired by banks to work in central call centers, taking questions from customers 24 hours a day, entering appropriate information into customer records, and, if necessary, referring customers to other specialists in the financial institution.

### Employment

Interviewing and new accounts clerks held about 239,000 jobs in 1998. More than half were employed by commercial banks and other depository institutions. The remainder worked mostly in hospitals and other



*Jobs should be plentiful for medical facility admitting clerks.*

health care facilities and for research and testing firms. Around 3 out of every 10 clerks worked part time.

### Job Outlook

Overall employment of interviewing and new accounts clerks is expected to increase about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2008. Much of this growth will stem from an increase in part-time and temporary jobs. In addition to growth, a larger number of job openings is expected to arise from the need to replace the thousands of interviewing and new accounts clerks who leave the occupation or the work force each year. Job prospects to fill these openings will be best for applicants with a broad range of job skills, such as the good customer service, math, and telephone skills.

The number of interviewing clerks is projected to grow faster than average, reflecting growth in the health services industry. This industry will hire more admissions interviewers as health care facilities consolidate staff and expand the role of the admissions staff, and as an aging and growing population requires more visits to health care practitioners. In addition, increasing use of market research will create more jobs for interviewers to collect data. In the future, though, more market research is expected to be conducted over the Internet, thus reducing the need for telephone interviewers to make individual calls.

Employment of new accounts clerks, on the other hand, is expected to grow only as fast as average as bank employment slows and more services are provided electronically. However, these changes will favor employment of new accounts clerks over other workers in banks, particularly tellers, because of their ability to provide a wide range of services. Also, new accounts clerks will be hired in increasing numbers by banks to handle customer inquiries at their call centers.

### Sources of Additional Information

Information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings appears in the *Information clerks* introduction to this section.

State employment service offices can provide information about employment opportunities.

## Receptionists

(O\*NET 55305)

### Nature of the Work

Receptionists are charged with a responsibility that may have a lasting impact on the success of an organization—making a good first impression. These workers are often the first representatives of an organization a visitor encounters, so they need to be courteous, professional,